Prohibitions That Are Taken Too Lightly

[English]

محرمات استهان بها كثير من الناس يجب الحذر منها

[اللغة الإنجليزية]

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Introduction

Praise be to Allah; we praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our own souls and from our evil deeds. Whomever Allah guides will never be led astray, and whomever Allah leaves astray, no-one will guide. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah Alone, with no partners or associates, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has laid down obligations which we are not permitted to ignore, and has set limits which we are not permitted to transgress, and has set out prohibitions which we are not allowed to violate.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whatever Allah has permitted in His Book is allowed, and whatever He has prohibited is forbidden; whatever He has remained silent about is a concession, so accept the concession of Allah, for Allah is never forgetful." Then he recited the ayah: ". . . and your Lord is never forgetful" [Maryam 19:64]. (Reported by al-Hakim, 2/375; classified as hasan by al-Albaani in Ghaayat al-Maraam, p. 14)

The things which have been prohibited are the boundaries or limits set by Allah:

". . . And whosoever transgresses the set limits of Allah, then indeed he has wronged himself . . ." [al-Talaaq 65:1]

Allah has issued a threat to the one who transgresses His set limits and violates His prohibitions, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And whosoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, and transgresses His limits, He will cast him into the Fire, to abide therein; and he shall have a disgraceful torment." [al-Nisaa' 4:14]

Avoiding that which has been forbidden is a duty, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whatever you have been prohibited to do, avoid it, and whatever you have been commanded to do, do as much of it as you can." (Reported by Muslim, Kitaab al-fadaa'il, hadeeth no. 130, Abd al-Baaqi edition).

It is well-known that some of those who follow their desires, who are weak at heart and have little knowledge, become irritated when they hear lists of prohibitions. They grumble and mutter, "Everything is haram, you haven't left us anything that is not forbidden! You make our lives boring and miserable. You don't talk about anything but what is haram, but religion is supposed to easy, not strict, and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

In response to such remarks, we say:

Allah, may He be glorified, rules as He wills and there is none to put back His judgement. He is All-Wise and Aware, and He allows whatever He wills and forbids whatever He wills, may He be glorified. One of the basic principles of our being His slaves is that we should accept whatever He decrees and submit fully to it. His rulings stem from His knowledge, wisdom and justice, and are not the matter of frivolity or foolish whims, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And the Word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice. None can change His words. And He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower." [al-An'aam 6:115]

Allah has explained to us the governing principle behind the allowing and prohibiting of various things (interpretation of the meaning):

". . . He allows them as lawful al-tayyibaat [(i.e., all good and lawful) as regards things, deeds, beliefs, persons, foods, etc.], and prohibits them as unlawful al-khabaa'ith (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'Shall I not tell you of the most serious of the major sins?' three times. We said, 'Of course, O Messenger of Allah!' He said, 'Associating anything in worship with Allah . . .'"

(Agreed upon; see al-Bukhari, no. 2511, al-Bagha edition).

Every other sin may be forgiven by Allah, apart from shirk, which requires specific repentance, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Verily, Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him in worship, but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He pleases . . ." [al-Nisaa' 4:48]

One of the forms of shirk which is particularly widespread in Muslim countries is:

Grave-worship,

the belief that dead awliyaa' ("saints") can fulfil one's needs or help at times of distress, and calling upon them for aid. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him . . ." [al-Israa' 17:23]

Similarly, they call upon dead Prophets, righteous people and others to intercede for them or to rescue them from some calamity, but Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Is not He (better than your gods) Who responds to the distressed one, when he calls Him, and Who removes the evil, and makes you inheritors of the earth, generations after generations? Is there any ilaah (god) with Allah? . . ." [al-Naml 27:62]

Some of them have adopted the habit of mentioning the name of a shaykh or wali ("saint") when they stand up, or sit down, or stumble, or encounter problems or distress, so they might say "O Muhammad!" or "O 'Ali!" or "O Husayn!" or "O Badawi!" or "O Jeelaani!" or "O Shaadhili!" or "O Rifaa'i!" - or they may call upon al-'Aydaroos or Sayyidah Zaynab or Ibn 'Alwaan. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Verily those whom you call upon besides Allah are slaves like you . . ." [al-A'raf 7:194]

Some of those who worship graves walk around them as if in Tawaaf, and acknowledge their corners, or touch them, kiss them, wipe their faces with their dust, prostrate towards them when they see them, or stand before them in fear and humility, praying for whatever they need of healing from some disease, or for a child, or for help with some difficulty. Sometimes they call upon the occupant of the grave, saying "O my master, I have come to you from far away, so do not let me down." But Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

(Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Allah will curse the one who sacrifices to anything other than Allah." (Reported by Imam Muslim, may Allah have mercy on him, in his Sahih, no. 1978, 'Abd al-Baaqi edition). This sin combines two haram deeds, that of sacrificing to anything other than Allah and that of sacrificing in the name of anything other than Allah, both of which make the meat of the animal slaughtered haram. One of the forms of sacrificing to anything other than Allah which was known during the first Jaahiliyyah and is still widespread nowadays is the practice of "offering a sacrifice to the jinn," whereby upon buying or constructing a house, or digging a well, people slaughter an animal at its entrance, out of fear of harm from the resident jinn. (See Tayseer al-'Aziz al-Hameed, al-Iftaa' edition, p. 158)

(peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied, "Yes, but they permitted things that Allah had forbidden, and the people accepted this, and they

forbade things that Allah had allowed, and the people accepted this too, and this is a form of worshipping them." (Reported by al-Bayhaqi in al-Sunan al-Kubraa, 10/116. See also al-Tirmidhi, no. 3095. Al-Albaani classified it as hasan in Ghaayat al-Maraam, p. 19).

Allah described the mushrikeen (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever goes to a fortune-teller and asks him about something, his prayers will not be accepted for forty nights" (Saheeh Muslim, 4/1751) - even though it is still obligatory to pray and to repent for this sin.

Astrology, or believing that the stars and planets have an influence on people's lives and events.

Zayd ibn Khaalid al-Juhani reported: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) led us in the morning prayer at al-Hudaybiyah after rain had fallen during the night. When he had finished, he turned around to face the people and said: 'Do you know what your Lord says?' They said, 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' He said: '[Allah says]: This morning one of My slaves became a believer in Me and one became a disbeliever. As for the one who said, "We have been given rain by the grace and mercy of Allah," he is a believer in Me and a disbeliever in the stars; as for the one who said, "We have been given rain by such-and-such a star," he is a disbeliever in Me and a believer in the stars.'" (Reported by al-Bukhaari; see Fath al-Baari, 2/333)

Similarly, the one who reads the horoscopes in newspapers and magazines and believes what they say about the influence of the stars and planets is a mushrik, and the one who reads them for entertainment is a sinner, because it is not permitted to entertain oneself by reading things that contain shirk, because Shaytaan will try to lead him to shirk through this.

Yet another form of shirk is

believing that certain things can bring benefit when the Creator has not made them so.

For example. some people believe in amulets and spells, or wearing certain types of pearls or seashells or metal earrings and so on, on the advice of fortune-tellers or magicians or in accordance with inherited customs. So they hang them around their own or their children's necks to ward off the evil eye - or so they claim; or they tie them onto their bodies or hang them in their cars and homes, or wear rings with special stones, thinking that these things can relieve or ward off distress. This without a doubt is contrary to the idea of

relying on Allah, and will only result in making a person even more weak, like seeking medicine in a haram way. These amulets obviously contain much shirk, such as seeking the help of some jinns and devils, or vague drawings and illegible writing. Some of these liars even write aayaat from the Qur'an, or mix them with words of shirk, or write them with impure substances such as menstrual blood. Hanging up these amulets or tying them to one's body is haram because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever hangs up an amulet is guilty of shirk." (Reported by Ahmad, 4/156; see also Silsilat al-Sahihah, no. 492).

If the one who does this believes that these things can cause benefit or harm instead of Allah, he is a mushrik who is guilty of al-shirk al-akbar. If he believes that they are a means of causing benefit or harm, then he is a mushrik who is guilty of al-shirk al-asghar, which includes shirk that consists of attributing causes to things other than Allah.

Showing off in worship:

among the conditions for any good deed to be acceptable are that it should be free of any kind of showing off and within the framework of the Sunnah. The person who performs acts of worship, like praying, in order to be seen by other people is a mushrik and his deed is unacceptable. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Verily, the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but it is He Who deceives them. And when they stand up for prayer, they stand with laziness and to be seen of men, and they do not remember Allah but little." [Al-Nisaa' 4:142]

Similarly, the person who does a good deed so that news of it will reach other people has also fallen into the sin of shirk. The threat of punishment for the one who does this was reported in the hadith narrated by Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him and his father), in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever does things to be seen and heard by others, Allah will cause him to be seen and heard as an example to others." (Reported by Muslim, 4/2289). Whoever does any act of worship for the sake of Allah and other people, his deeds will be unacceptable, as is stated in the hadith qudsi: "I am so self-sufficient that I am in no need of having an associate. Thus he who does a deed for someone else's sake as well as Mine will have that deed renounced by Me to him who he associated with Me." (Reported by Muslim, no. 2985).

It may happen that a person starts to do a deed for the sake of Allah, then the urge to show off comes over him. If he resists that impulse his deed will still be acceptable, but if he submits willingly to it, then in the opinion of most of the scholars his deed will be unacceptable.

Superstitious belief in omens:

this is a form of pessimism, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"But whenever good came to them, they said, 'Ours is this.' And if evil afflicted them, they ascribed it to evil omens connected with Musa and those with him . . ." [al-A'raaf 7:131]

Before Islam, if one of the Arabs wanted to do something like travelling, he would take hold of a bird and release it: if it flew to the right, he would take this as a good omen and proceed with his plans, but if it flew to the left, he would take it as a bad omen and cancel his plans. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave his verdict on this practice when he said: "Al-Tiyarah (observing birds for omens) is shirk." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 1/389; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 3955).

This kind of haram belief that goes against Tawheed also includes the practice of regarding certain times etc., as inauspicious, such as not holding a wedding in Safar, or regarding the last Wednesday of every month as a day of evil omen and ongoing calamity, or believing that numbers such as 13, or certain names, are "unlucky." It is also haram to believe that handicapped people are bad omens, such as going to open one's store but turning back upon seeing a one-eyed man. All of this is haram and is part of the shirk for which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) disowned people. 'Imraan ibn Husayn reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "He is not one of us who observes birds for omens or has someone else do this for him, or who predicts the future or asks someone else to do it for him, (and I think he said) or who practices magic or asks someone else to do it for him." (Reported by al-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer, 18/162; see also Saheeh al-Jaami' 5435).

The expiation required from the person who commits any of these sins is reported in the hadeeth reported by Abdullah ibn 'Amr: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'Whoever was turned away from doing something because of a bad omen is guilty of shirk.' The people asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, what expiation is there for doing that?' He said, 'That he should say: "O Allah, there is no goodness except Your goodness and no omen except your omen and there is no god but You."'" (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 2/220; al-Silsilah al-Sahihah, 1065).

Pessimism is a part of everyone's nature, to a greater or lesser extent; the best cure for it is reliance upon Allah (tawakkul), as Ibn Mas'ood said: "There is no one among us (who will not feel pessimistic sometimes), but when we rely on Allah, He makes that feeling go away." (Reported by Abu Dawud, no. 3910; see also al-Silsilah al-Sahihah, 430).

Swearing by something other than Allah:

Allah may swear by whatever of His creatures He wills, but His creatures are not permitted to swear by anything other than Allah. Many people swear all kinds of oaths by things other than Allah, but swearing by something is like glorifying it, and it is not right to glorify anything or anyone other than Allah. Ibn 'Umar reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah has prohibited that you should swear by your fathers. If anyone swears, let him swear by Allah, or else remain silent." (Reported by al-Bukhari; see al-Fath, 11/530). Ibn 'Umar also reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever swears by something other than Allah is guilty of shirk." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 2/125; see Sahih al-Jaami', 6204). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever swears by trustworthiness is not one of us." (Reported by Abu Dawud 3253; see also al-Silsilah al-Sahihah, no. 94).

It is not permitted to swear by the Ka'bah, by trustworthiness, by honour, by help, by the blessing of so-and-so, by the life of so-and-so, by the virtue of the Prophet, by the virtue of a wali, by one's father and mother, by the heads of one's children, etc. All of that is haraam, and the expiation for doing it is to say La ilaaha ill-Allah, as is stated in the Sahih hadith: "Whoever swears and says 'By al-Laat' or 'By al-'Uzza,' let him say 'La ilaaha ill-Allah (there is no god except Allah).'" (Reported by al-Bukhari al-Fath, 11/536). There are other phrases that similarly involve shirk and are therefore forbidden, but that are often spoken by Muslims, such as: "I seek refuge with Allah and with you," "I am depending on Allah and on you," "This is from Allah and from you," "I have no-one but Allah and you," "I have Allah in heaven and I have you on earth," "If it were not for Allah and so-and-so," "I disown Islam," "Time has let me down" (and every other expression which involves cursing time, like saying, "This is a bad time," "This is an unlucky time," "Time is a betrayer," etc., because cursing time is an insult to Allah Who has created time), references to "Nature's way." Names that imply being a slave of anyone other than Allah, such as 'Abd 'al-Maseeh, 'Abd al-Nabi, 'Abd al-Rasool and 'Abd al-Husayn, are also forbidden.

There are also modern expressions which are contrary to Tawheed and are therefore haram, such as "Islamic socialism," "Islamic democracy," "The will of the people is the will of Allah," "Religion is for Allah and the land is for the people," "In the name of Arabism," "In the name of the revolution," etc.

It is also haram to use titles such as "King of kings" or "Judge of judges" for human beings; to address munafiqeen or kuffaar with titles like "Sayyid (master)" (whether speaking Arabic or other languages), to use the words "If only..." - which imply discontent and regret, and open the way for Shaytan,

and to say “O Allah, forgive me if You want to.” (For more information, see Mu’jam al-Manahi al-Lafziyyah, Bakr or Zayd)

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Sitting with hypocrites and wrongdoers to enjoy their company or to keep them company:

Many of those who do not have strong faith deliberately sit with people who are immoral and sinful. They may even sit with those who attack the Sharee’ah and make fun of Islam and the people who adhere to it strictly. There is no doubt that this is a forbidden deed, one which could undermine a person’s belief. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And when you see those who engage in a false conversation about Our Verses by mocking at them, stay away from them till they turn to another topic. And if Shaytan causes you to forget, then after the remembrance sit not in the company of those people who are the zaalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.)” [al-An’aam 6:68]

In that case it is not permitted to sit with them, even if they are closely-related or are very kind and good company, except for the purposes of da’wah or refuting their false talk. But accepting and remaining quiet about their conduct is not permitted. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“They (the hypocrites) swear to you (Muslims) that you may be pleased with them, but if you are pleased with them, certainly Allah is not pleased with the people who are al-faasiqoon (rebellious, disobedient to Allah).” [al-Tawbah 9:96]

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Lack of composure in prayer:

one of the worst forms of theft or cheating is cheating in prayer. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The worst type of thief is the one who steals from his prayer.” The people asked, “O Messenger of Allah, how can a person steal from his prayer?” He said: “By not doing rukoo’ and sujood properly.” (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, 5/310; see also Sahih al-Jaami’, 997). This lack of composure and failure to pause in rukoo’ and sujood and to stand up straight after rukoo’ or sit up properly between sujoods may be observed in many of those who pray, and hardly any mosque is free of examples of people who do not have the proper composure

in prayer. Correct composure is one of the pillars of prayer, without which prayer is invalid. This is a serious matter. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "A man's prayer is not good enough until his back is straight in rukoo' and sujood." (Reported by Abu Dawud, 1/533; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 7224). There is no doubt that lacking the proper composure is bad, and the person who is guilty of this deserves to be reprimanded and threatened with punishment. Abu 'Abdullah al-Ash'ari reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) led his Companions in prayer, then he sat with a group of them. A man came in and started to pray, but made his movements rapid like a chicken pecking the ground. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Do you see this? Whoever dies having done this has died outside of the community of Muhammad, and his prayer is like a crow pecking blood. The person who bows then pecks in his sujood is like a hungry man who eats no more than one or two dates - what good will that do him?" (Reported by Ibn Khuzaymah in his Sahih 1/332; see also al-Albaani, Sifat Salaat al-Nabi (The Prophet's Prayer described), 131). Zayd ibn Wahb said: "Hudhayfah saw a man who was not performing rukoo' and sujood properly. He said: 'You have not prayed, and if you were to die, you would die on a way other than that revealed by Allah to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).'" (Reported by al-Bukhari see al-Fath, 2/274). Once a person is aware of this ruling, if he fails to perform prayer with the proper composure, he should repeat it and repent to Allah for what is past; he does not need to repeat all of his previous prayers, as is indicated by the hadith "Repeat your prayer, for you have not prayed."

Fidgeting and making unnecessary movements in prayer:

Hardly any of the people who pray are free from this problem, because they are not following the command of Allah (interpretation of the meaning): ". . . And stand before Allah with obedience" [al-Baqarah 2:238]; and they fail to understand the words of Allah (interpretation of the meaning): "Successful indeed are the believers, those who offer their Salaat with all solemnity and full submissiveness." [al-Mu'minoon 23:1-2]

When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was asked about smoothing the earth before prostrating, he said, "Do not wipe it when you are praying; if you have to, then just smooth the gravel once." (Reported by Abu Dawud, 1/581; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 7452). The scholars mentioned that continuous, excessive, unnecessary movement invalidates one's prayer. How can those fidgets stand before Allah, looking at their watches, straightening their clothes, putting their fingers in their noses, looking to the right and the left and up to the sky, and not fearing that Allah may take away their sight or Shaytan may steal their prayer??

Deliberately anticipating the movements of the imam (when praying in congregation):

Man is hasty by nature, as it says in the Qur'an (interpretation of the meaning): "... and man is ever hasty ..." [al-Israa' 17:11]. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Deliberation is from Allah and haste is from Shaytan." (Reported by al-Bayhaqi in al-Sunan al-Kubra, 10/104; see also al-Silsilah, 1795). One often notices, when praying in congregation, people to the left and right anticipating the imam in rukoo', sujood and the takbeeraat that signal changes in position - one even notices it in oneself too, sometimes. People may even precede the imam in giving salaam at the end of the prayer. This is a matter which may appear unimportant to many, but the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) issued a stern warning when he said: "Does the person who raises his head before the imam not fear that Allah may turn his head into the head of a donkey?" (Reported by Muslim, 1/320-321). If a person is required to come to the prayer with dignity and composure, how then should he be during the prayer itself? Some people are confused about this issue and seek to compensate by delaying their movements after the imam; these people should know that the fuqahaa', may Allah have mercy on them, have described an excellent way to control the matter, which is that the person following the imam should only start his movements after the imam has finished pronouncing the ra' ("r") of "Allahu akbar"; then the person following the imam is permitted to move, and not before or after. The Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to be very keen to avoid anticipating his movements when he led them in prayer. One of them, al-Baraa' ibn 'Aazib (may Allah be pleased with him) said that they used to pray behind the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "When he raised his head from rukoo', I would never see anyone bending his back in sujood until the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had placed his forehead on the ground, then everyone would go down in sujood behind him." (Reported by Muslim, no. 474, 'Abd al-Baaqi edition). When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) grew older, and became rather slow in his movements, he told the people praying behind him: "O people, I have gained weight, so do not anticipate me in performing rukoo' and sujood." (Reported by al-Bayhaqi, 2/93 and classified as hasan in Irwaa' al-Ghaleel, 2/290). The imam is obliged to follow the Sunnah in making takbeer when he prays, as reported in the hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him): "When the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stood up to pray, he would say takbeer when he stood up and when he bowed . . . then he would say takbeer when he went down for sujood and when he raised his head, then when he went down for sujood again and when he raised his head again. Then he would repeat this throughout the whole prayer until it was finished, and he would say takbeer when he stood up after

completing two rak'ahs." (Reported by al-Bukhari, no. 756, al-Baghaa edition). If the imam pronounces takbeer at the same time as he makes the movements, and the people following him strive to follow the guidelines mentioned here, then they will have performed the congregational prayer correctly.

Coming to the mosque after eating onions or garlic, or anything that has an offensive smell:

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "O Children of Adam! Take your adornment (by wearing your clean clothes) while praying . . ." [al-A'raaf 7:31]. Jaabir said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'Whoever eats garlic or onions, let him keep away from us,' or 'let him keep away from our mosque and stay in his house.'" (Reported by al-Bukhari see al-Fath, 2/339). According to a report narrated by Muslim, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever eats onions or garlic or leeks, let him not come near our mosque, because the angels will be offended by what is offensive to the sons of Adam." (Reported by Muslim, no. 1/395). 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab addressed the people one Friday and said: "O people, you eat two things that I think come from bad plants: onions and garlic. I saw the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), when he noticed this smell coming from a man in the mosque, order him to go out to al-Baqee'. Whoever wants to eat these things, let him cook them to death." (Reported by Muslim, 1/396).

We might also include here those who come to the mosque straight from work, with unpleasant odours emanating from their armpits and socks. Even worse than these are smokers who have the habit of consuming their haram cigarettes then coming to the mosque and disturbing the worshippers of Allah, people and angels alike, with their smell.

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Zinaa - fornication and adultery:

One of the aims of Islamic sharee'ah is to preserve honour and lineage, so Zinaa (unlawful sexual intercourse) is forbidden. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And come not near to unlawful sexual intercourse. Verily it is a faahishah (a great sin) and an evil way (that leads to Hell unless Allah forgives)" [al-Israa' 17:32]

Sharee'ah blocks all the ways and means that could lead to zinaa, by enjoining hijaab and lowering the gaze, and by forbidding being alone with a non-mahram woman, etc.

The married man who commits adultery deserves the worst kind of punishment, which is stoning to death, so that he may taste the results of his deeds and so that every part of his body may suffer just as every part of his body enjoyed the illicit liaison. The fornicator who was previously unmarried is to be punished with the maximum number of lashes mentioned in sharee'ah, which is 100 lashes, in addition to the scandal of this punishment being witnessed by a group of believers, and the humiliation of being banished from his city and the scene of his crime for one full year.

In Barzakh, the punishment for men and women who were guilty of zinaa is that they will be in an oven whose top is narrow and whose bottom is wide, with a fire beneath it, and they will be naked therein. When the heat of the fire increases, they will scream and rise up until they nearly come out of the top, then when the fire decreases, they will fall back down. This will repeated over and over until the onset of the Hour.

What is even worse is when a man continues to commit adultery even when he grows old, death approaches and Allah gives him the opportunity to repent. Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "There are three to whom Allah will not speak on the Day of Resurrection, nor praise, nor look at; theirs will be a painful torment: an old man who commits Zinaa, a king who lies, and a poor man who is arrogant." (Reported by Muslim, 1/102-103). Among the worst of incomes is the earnings of a prostitute which she takes before committing Zinaa, and the immoral woman who earns her living by selling herself is deprived of having her prayers answered when the gates of heaven are opened at midnight. (The hadith is in Sahih al-Jaami', 2971) Being in need or being poor are not acceptable excuses for transgressing the limits set by Allah. There is an old saying that the free woman would rather starve than eat by displaying her breasts, so how about her private parts then?

Nowadays all the doors of immorality have been opened, and Shaytan and his supporters have made it very easy for people to commit sin. This has been followed by the spread of tabarruj (wanton display) and unveiling among women, people allowing their gazes to wander to things they should not look at, an increase in mixing between the sexes, the popularity of immoral magazines and lewd films, increased travel to corrupt countries and the establishment of a market for prostitution, an increase in the violation of honour, and an increase in the number of illegitimate births and abortions.

O Allah, we ask you to show us Your mercy and to protect us from immorality; we ask You to purify our hearts and to keep our private parts chaste, and to place a barrier between us and what is haram.

Sodomy (Homosexuality):

Sodomy, or intercourse between two males, was the crime of the people of Lut. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And (remember) Lut, when he said to his people: 'You commit al-faahishah (sodomy - the worst sin) which none has preceded you in (committing) among the 'aalameen (mankind and jinns). Verily, you commit sodomy with men, and rob the wayfarer, and practise al-munkar (disbelief, polytheism and every kind of evil deed) in your meetings.' . . ." [al-'Ankaboot 29:29].

Because of the repulsive nature and enormity of this sin, Allah inflicted four kinds of punishment which He had never before inflicted in combination upon any other people; they were: these people would be blinded, their city would be turned upside-down, stones of baked clay, piled up, would be rained down upon them, and an awful cry would be sent upon them.

In Islam, those guilty of this crime are to be killed by the sword, according to the soundest opinion. This punishment is to carried out on both the one who does this and the one to whom it is done, if it is done freely and by choice. Ibn 'Abbas reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whomever you find committing the sin of the people of Lut, kill them - both the one who does it and the one to whom it is done." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 1/300; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 6565). The modern-day spread of incurable diseases like the killer AIDS caused by this corruption, that were unknown to our predecessors, is an indication of the wisdom of the Sharee'ah in prescribing this severe punishment.

Not allowing one's husband to have marital relations for no legitimate reason

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If a man calls his wife to his bed, and she refuses, and he goes to sleep angry with her, the angels will curse her until morning." (Reported by al-Bukhari; see al-Fath, 6/314).

Many women, when they have an argument with their husbands, "punish" them - so they think - by denying them their marital rights. This may result in major corruption if the husband is tempted to do something haram, or it may backfire on the wife if the husband starts to think seriously of taking another wife.

A wife should hasten to respond to her husband's call if he wants her, in obedience to the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon

him): “If a man calls his wife to his bed, let her respond, even if she is riding on the back of a camel (i.e., very busy).” (See Zawaa’id al-Bazaar, 2/181; see also Sahih al-Jaami’, 547).

At the same time, the husband must show consideration towards his wife if she is sick, pregnant or depressed, so as to maintain harmony and prevent discontent or hatred.

Asking one’s husband for a divorce for no legitimate reason

Many women hasten to demand a divorce from their husbands for the least little argument, or if their husbands do not give them what they want of money. Some women may be egged on by troublemakers among their relatives or neighbours to challenge their husbands with provocative words such as: “If you were a real man, you would divorce me!” The dire results of divorce are well known: breakdown of the family and children roaming the streets. A person may come to regret divorce when it is too late. For all these reasons and others, the Sharee’ah wisely prohibited such actions. Thawbaan (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Any woman who asks her husband for a divorce with no sound reason will be deprived of smelling the fragrance of Paradise.” (Reported by Ahmad, 5.277; see also Sahih al-Jaami’, 2703). ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Aamir (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Woman who ask for divorce and women who contend unnecessarily with their husbands are hypocrites.” (Reported by al-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer, 17/339; see also Sahih al-Jaami’, 1934). But if there is a sound reason, such as the husband abandoning prayer, drinking or taking drugs, or forcing his wife to do something haram, or oppressing her and making her suffer by denying her the rights granted to her by Islam, and he does not listen to advice to mend his ways, then in this case there is nothing wrong with a woman seeking divorce for her own sake and for the sake of her religion.

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Zihaar:

One of the expressions of the first Jaahiliyyah that is still widespread in this ummah is the phenomenon of Zihaar, whereby a man says to his wife, “You are to me like the back of my mother,” or “You are as forbidden for me as my sister,” and other similarly ugly statements whose repulsive nature was confirmed by the Sharee’ah, because of the oppression of women involved. Allah referred to this in the Qur'an (interpretation of the meaning):

"Those among you who make their wives unlawful to them by saying to them, 'You are like my mother's back,' they cannot be their mothers. None can be their mothers except those who gave them birth. And verily, they utter an ill word and a lie. And verily, Allah is Oft-Pardoning, Oft-Forgiving." [Al-Mujaadilah 58:2]

The Sharee'ah has imposed a heavy penalty (kafaarah) for this crime, similar to that required for killing a person by mistake or for having intercourse during the day in Ramadan; the person who has committed zihaar is not permitted to approach his wife until he has paid this penalty. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And those who make unlawful to them (their wives) (by zihaar), and wish to free themselves from what they uttered, (the penalty) in that case (is) the freeing of a slave before they touch each other. That is an admonition to you (so that you may not return to such an ill thing). And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.

And he who finds not (the money for freeing a slave) must fast two successive months before they both touch each other. And for him who is unable to do so, he should feed sixty miskeen (poor). That is in order that you may have perfect Faith in Allah and His Messenger. And for disbelievers, there is a painful torment." [Al-Mujaadilah 58:3-4]

Having intercourse with one's wife during her period

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: that is an adhaa (a harmful thing for a husband to have sexual intercourse with his wife while she is having her menses), therefore keep away from women during menses and go not unto them till they have purified (from menses and have taken a bath) . . ." [al-Baqarah 2:222]

So a man is not permitted to approach his wife until her period has ended and she has taken a bath (ghusl). Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

". . . And when they have purified themselves, then go in unto them as Allah has ordained for you . . . " [al-Baqarah 2:222]

The repulsive nature of this sin is indicated by the words of the Prophet (pace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "Whoever has intercourse with a menstruating women, or with a woman in her rectum, or goes to a fortune-teller, has disbelieved in what was revealed to Muhammad." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi from Abu Hurairah, 1/243; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 5918).

Whoever does this by mistake, not deliberately, does not have to pay any penalty, but the person who does it deliberately and with full knowledge of what he is doing must pay the penalty, which according to the scholars with the soundest knowledge is one dinar or half a dinar. Some scholars say that there is a choice in the amount to be paid; others say that if a man has intercourse with his wife at the beginning of her period, when the flow of blood is heavy, he must pay one dinar, and if he does it at the end of her period when the flow is light, he must pay half a dinar. In modern terms, a dinar is equal to 25.4 grams of gold: this or the equivalent amount of currency must be given in charity.

Having intercourse with one's wife in her rectum

Some perverted people who have little faith do not hesitate to have intercourse with a woman in her rectum (the place from which excrement emerges). This is a major sin, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cursed the one who does this. Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "He is cursed, the one who has intercourse with a woman in her rectum." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 2/479; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 5865). Indeed, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever has intercourse with a menstruating women, or with a woman in her rectum, or goes to a fortune-teller, has disbelieved in what was revealed to Muhammad." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi from Abu Hurairah, 1/243; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 5918). Although there are many righteous and sensible women who refuse to do this, there are many husbands who threaten their wives with divorce if they do not comply. Some husbands even deceive their wives who may be too shy to ask a scholar about this matter; they tell them that this is halaal, and they may even misquote the Qur'an to support their claim (interpretation of the meaning): "Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth when or how you will . . ." [al-Baqarah 2:223]. But it is well-known that the Sunnah explains the Qur'an, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stated that it is permitted to have intercourse with one's wife in whatever way one wishes, approaching from the front or the back, so long as intercourse is in the place from which a child is born (the vagina); it is obvious that the anus, from which excrement is produced, is not the place from which a child is born. One of the reasons for this crime is the fact that many people enter what should be a clean and pure married life with an inheritance of dirty, haram, jaahili, perverted practices, or memories filled with scenes from lewd movies for which they have not repented to Allah. It is also well known that this deed is haram even if both parties consent to it; mutual consent to a haram deed does not make it halaal.

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Not treating co-wives fairly

One of the things that Allah has enjoined in His Book is fair treatment of co-wives. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"You will never be able to do perfect justice between wives even if it is your ardent desire, so do not incline too much to one of them (by giving her more of your time and provision) so as to leave the other hanging (i.e., neither divorced nor married). And if you do justice, and do all that is right and fear Allah by keeping away from all that is wrong, then Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." [al-Nisaa' 4:129]

The justice that is required here is a fair division of nights, and the giving of each wife her rights as regards spending and clothing. This does not refer to emotions or love, because man has no control over his feelings. But some people, when they marry more than one wife, favour one and neglect the other, spending more time with one wife and spending more on her, and ignoring the other. This is haram, and the person who does this will come on the Day of Resurrection in the condition described by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah: "Whoever has two wives and gives one of them preferential treatment, he will come on the Day of Resurrection with half of his body leaning." (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 2/601; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 6491).

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Being alone with a non-mahram woman

Shaytan is always keen to tempt people and make them commit haraam deeds. For this reason, Allah warned us (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Follow not the footsteps of Shaytan. And whosoever follows the footsteps of Shaytan, then, verily he commands al-fahshaa' (indecency) and al-munkar (evil deeds) . . ." [al-Noor 24:21]

Shaytan runs through the veins of mankind like blood, and one of the ways in which he induces people to commit indecent acts is by leading a man to be alone with a non-mahram woman. Islam blocks this way by forbidding such conduct, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "No man is alone with a (non-mahram) woman, but Shaytan will be the third among them." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 3/474; see also Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, 3118). Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“From this day on, no man should enter upon a woman whose husband is absent unless there is another man or two with him.” (Reported by Muslim, 4/1711). It is not permitted for a man to be alone in a house, room or car with a non-mahram woman, including his brother’s wife or a servant. Similarly a female patient should not be alone with a doctor, and so on. Many people are careless about this matter, whether because they trust themselves or for some other reason, with the results that many commit indecent acts or take the steps that lead to them, which in turn results in the tragedies of confused lineage and illegitimate births.

Shaking hands with a non-mahram woman

This is one of the cases where incorrect social customs have taken precedence over the laws of Allah, to such an extent that if you try to talk to people and show them evidence that this is wrong, they will accuse you of being backward, having a complex, trying to break family ties, doubting their good intentions, etc. Shaking hands with female cousins, brothers’ wives and uncles’ wives is now easier than drinking water in our society, but if we look properly we will understand the seriousness of the matter.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “If one of you were to be stabbed in the head with an iron needle it would be better for him than touching a woman whom he is not permitted to touch.” (Reported by al-Tabaraani, 20/212; see also Sahih al-Jaami’, 4921). There is no doubt that this is an act of Zinaa, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The eyes may commit Zinaa, the hands may commit Zinaa, the feet may commit Zinaa and the private parts may commit Zinaa." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 1/412; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 4921).

Is there anyone more pure in heart than Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)? Yet still he said, “I do not shake hands with women.” (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 6/357; see also Sahih al-Jaami’, 7054, and al-Isaabah, 4/354, Daar al-Kitaab al-’Arabi edition). And he said, "I do not touch the hands of women." (Reported by al-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer, 24/342; see also Saheeh al-Jaami', 7054 and al-Isaabah, 4/354, Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabi edition). ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: “No, by Allah, the hand of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) never touched the hand of a (non-mahram) woman. He received bay’ah (pledge of allegiance) from them by word only.” (Reported by Muslim, 3/489). Let them fear Allah, those people who threaten their pious wives with divorce if they do not shake hands with their brothers.

We should also note that placing a barrier such as a piece of cloth is of no use; it is still haram to shake hands with a non-mahram woman.

A woman wearing perfume when going out or passing by non-mahram men

This practice is widespread nowadays, despite the stern warning of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who said: "Any woman who applies perfume and then goes out among the people so that they could smell her fragrance is a zaaniyah (adulteress)." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 4/418; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 105). Some women are very careless and take the matter too lightly, especially in front of drivers, shopkeepers, school porters, etc., even though the Sharee'ah states very strictly that the woman who wears perfume must wash herself like a person must wash when in a state of janaanah (i.e., perform ghusl), if she wants to go out to the mosque. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Any woman who wears perfume then goes out to the mosque, so that the fragrance can be discerned, her prayers will not be accepted until she performs ghusl like the ghusl to be performed when in a state of janaabah." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 2/444; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 2703).

We complain to Allah about the bukhoor and 'ood (types of incense) used at weddings and women's parties before people leave, and the use of strong-smelling perfumes in market-places, means of transportation and mixed gatherings in the mosques even during the nights of Ramadan. Islam tells us that women's perfume should be that which has colour but little smell. We ask Allah not to despise us and not to punish righteous men and women for the deeds of foolish men and women. May He guide us all to the Straight Path.

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A woman travelling without a mahram

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "It is not permitted for the woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day to travel one day's distance without the presence of a mahram." (Reported by Muslim, 2/977). When a woman travels without a mahram, this encourages corrupt people to prey on her because of her weakness; at the very least, her honour will be harmed. This prohibition applies also to a woman travelling by plane, even if - as is often claimed - one mahram sees her off at one end and another mahram meets her at the other. Who is going to sit next to her during the journey? What if technical problems divert the plane to another airport, or the flight is delayed? What if...? There are too many stories of things that went wrong. For a person to be considered a mahram, he must meet four conditions: he should be a Muslim, over the age of puberty, of sound mind, and male.

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'No woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day should travel a distance of three days' journey or more unless her father, son, husband, brother or other mahram is with her." (Reported by Muslim, 2/977).

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Deliberately looking at a non-mahram woman

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and to protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.). That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is All-Aware of what they do." [al-Noor 24:30]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The adultery of the eyes is by looking" (i.e. by looking at what Allah has forbidden). (Reported by al-Bukhaari, see Fath al-Baari, 11/26). Looking for a legitimate purpose is exempted from this rule, such as looking at a woman for marriage purposes, or a doctor examining a patient for medical reasons, etc. Women are equally forbidden to look at non-mahram men, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things) and to protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.) . . ." [al-Noor 24:31]

Men are also forbidden to look with desire at a man with a hairless or beautiful face. Men are forbidden to look at the 'awrah of other men, and women are forbidden to look at the 'awrah of other women. If it is forbidden to look at something, it is forbidden to touch it, even over clothing. One of the ways in which Shaytaan deceives people is by making them think that there is nothing wrong with looking at pictures in magazines or watching movies, because what is seen is not "real," even though such images clearly cause so much damage by provoking desires.

Seeing one's womenfolk behaving in an immoral fashion and keeping silent

Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "There are three whom Allah will deprive of Paradise: the one who drinks intoxicants, the one who is disobedient to his parents, and the one who accepts immoral conduct on the part of his family." (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, 2/69; see also Saheeh

al-Jaami', 3047). One of the many examples of this in modern times is men turning a blind eye to their daughters or wives contacting non-mahram men and chatting to them in a way that may be described as "romantic," or accepting one of the women of his household being alone with a non-mahram man, or allowing them to sit alone with a driver or other employee, or letting them go out without proper hijaab, so that everyone may look at them, or bringing home immoral magazines and movies.

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Making false claims about a child's lineage, or denying one's own child

According to Sharee'ah, it is not permissible for a Muslim to claim to belong to anyone other than his father, or to claim to belong to a people of whom he is not a member. Some people may do this for material gains, and may obtain documentation to "confirm" their false identity officially. Some people may do this out of hatred towards a father who abandoned them when they were children. All of this is haraam, and may lead to much chaos and corruption in a number of fields, such as knowing who is one's mahram, marriage, inheritance and so on. Sa'd and Abu Bakrah (may Allah be pleased with them) both reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever knowingly claims to belong to anyone other than his father, Paradise will be denied him." (Reported by al-Bukhaari; see Fath al-Bari, 8/45). It is also forbidden to tamper with lineages or make false claims about a person's descent. There are some people who, when they want to fight dirty in arguments with their wives, accuse them of immoral conduct and disown their children, without any proof, when the child was born "in their bed" (i.e. is the husband's child and no-one else's). Then there are some wives who betray their trust and become pregnant with another man's child, but claim that it belongs to the husband. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) issued a stern warning against such conduct. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that when aayat al-mulaa'anah [al-Noor 24:7 - check] was revealed, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The woman who brings into a people someone who does not belong to them has nothing to do with Allah, and Allah will not admit her to His Paradise. Any man who denies his own child when he is looking at him, Allah will conceal Himself from him and expose him before all the people." (Reported by Abu Dawud, 2/695; see also Mishkat al-Masaabeeh, 3316).

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Consuming riba (usury or interest)

In the Qur'an, Allah does not declare war on anyone except the people who deal in riba (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Be afraid of Allah and give up what remains (due to you) of riba (from now onward), if you are (really) believers. And if you do not do it, then take a message of war from Allah and His Messenger." [al-Baqarah 2:278-279]

This is sufficient to explain the abhorrence of this deed in the sight of Allah, may He be glorified.

One may easily discern the extent of devastation, at the individual and the international level, caused by dealing with riba - such as bankruptcy, recession, economic stagnation, inability to repay loans, high unemployment, collapse of many companies and institutions, etc. Daily toil has become a never-ending struggle to pay off interest on loans and societies have become class-ridden structures in which huge wealth in concentrated in the hands of a few. Perhaps all this is a manifestation of the war threatened by Allah to those who deal in riba.

Everyone who has something to do with riba, whether he is one of the main parties involved or is a middleman or facilitator, has been cursed by Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Jaabir (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cursed "the one who consumes riba, the one who gives it to others, the one who writes it down and the one who witnesses it." He said: "They are all the same." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1219). Based on this, it is not permitted to do work that involves writing interest-based contracts and conditions, paying or receiving riba, depositing it or guarding it. Generally speaking, it is haraam to be directly or indirectly involved with riba in any way, shape or form.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was keen to explain the ugliness of this major sin. 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "There are seventy-three types of riba, the least of which is as abhorrent as a man having intercourse with his own mother and worst of which is [violating] a Muslim's honor and sanctity. (Reported by al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak, 2/37); see also Saheeh al-Jaami', 3533). 'Abdullah ibn Hanzalah (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Knowingly consuming a dirham of riba is worse for a man than committing adultery thirty-six times." (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, 5/225; see also Saheeh al-Jaami', 3375). The prohibition on riba does not just apply to deals between rich and poor, as some people think; it is a general prohibition that applies to every person and every situation. How many rich people and big businessmen have gone bankrupt because of riba! The least harm riba does is to destroy the blessing

(barakah) of the money, even if a person's wealth is great. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Even if riba is much, it will end up being a small amount." (Reported by al-Haakim, 2/37; see also Saheeh al-Jaami', 3542). This does not refer to whether the ratio of interest is high or low; all riba is haraam, and the one who deals with it will be raised up on the Day of Resurrection like the one who stands beaten by Shaytaan resulting in insanity and epilepsy.

In spite of the enormity of this sin, Allah has told us to repent from it and has explained how. Allah says to those who deal in riba (interpretation of the meaning): ". . . but if you repent, you shall have your capital sums. Deal not unjustly (by asking more than your capital sums), and you shall not be dealt with unjustly (by receiving less than your capital sums)." [al-Baqarah 2:279] This is quintessential justice.

The believer must despise this major sin and feel its abhorrence, even if he puts his money in interest-based banks because he has no other choice and is afraid that his money may be lost or stolen otherwise. He should feel that he is being compelled by necessity to do this, like one who eats dead meat, or worse. At the same time, he should seek the forgiveness of Allah and try to find an alternative if he can. He is not permitted to ask the bank for interest, and if the bank deposits it in his account, he must get rid of it in whatever way is permissible. This money cannot be counted as sadaqah (charity), because Allah is pure and accepts only that which is pure. He cannot benefit from this money by using it to by food, drink, clothing, transportation or housing; he cannot use it to fulfil obligations such as spending on his wife, child or parents, or to pay zakaat or taxes, or to defend himself in court. Rather, he should just get rid of it, for fear of the wrath of Allah.

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Concealing a product's faults at the time of sale

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) once passed by a pile of food that was for sale. He put his hand in it and felt dampness, so he asked, "What is this, O seller of the food?" He said, "It was rained on, O Messenger of Allah." The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Why don't you put it on top, so that people can see it? Whoever deceives (the people) is not one of us." (Reported by Muslim, 1/99).

There are many traders nowadays who do not fear Allah, and try to conceal faults by wrapping it in plastic [?], putting faulty produce in the bottom of the box, using chemicals and the like to make a product look good, or concealing noises in engines that may indicate a fault - so that when the purchaser brings a product home, it soon starts to wear out. Some traders change expiry dates,

or prevent the buyer from examining or trying out a product. Many of those who sell cars or other types of equipment do not point out the product's faults. All of this is haraam, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The Muslim is the brother of his fellow Muslim. The Muslim is not permitted to sell to his brother anything which is faulty without pointing out the faults to him." (Reported by Ibn Maajah, 2/754; see also Saheeh al-Jaami', 6705). Some traders even think that their responsibility ends when they tell buyers at an auction, "I am selling a heap of metal, a heap of metal..." This is a sale in which there is no blessing, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The two parties involved in a sale have the choice (to end it - i.e. the sale is not final) until they part. If both have been truthful and honest about any faults, the sale will be blessed, but if they have lied and concealed any faults, the blessing of the sale will be lost." (Reported by al-Bukhaari; see al-Fath, 4/328).

Artificially inflating prices

This refers to the practice of artificially inflating the price with no intention of buying, in order to deceive others, thus pushing them to add more to the price they are offering. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Do not artificially inflate prices." (Reported by al-Bukhaari, see Fath al-Baari, 10/484). This is undoubtedly a form of deceit, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Double-dealing and cheating will end in Hell." (See Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth al-Saheehah, 1057). Many salesmen at auctions and in car salesrooms are earning unclean and haraam income because of the many haraam things that they do, such as conspiring to artificially inflate prices and deceive purchasers, or to lower the price of one of their products, or conversely pretending to be customers and raising the prices at auctions to deceive and cheat.

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Trading after the second call to prayer on Friday

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "O you who believe! When the call is proclaimed for the salaat (prayer) on the day of Friday (Jumu'ah prayer), come to the remembrance of Allah and leave off business (and every other thing), that is better for you if you did but know!" [al-Jumu'ah 62:9].

Some people continue trading in their stores and in front of the mosque even after the second call to prayer; those who buy from them also share in their guilt, even if they only buy a siwaak (natural toothbrush). According to the soundest opinion, this sale is invalid. Some owners of restaurants, bakeries

and factories force their employees to work at the time of Jumu'ah prayers; even if this leads to an apparent increase in earnings, they will ultimately be losers in reality. The employee is obliged to act in accordance with the teaching of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "There is no obedience to a created being if it involves disobedience to Allah." (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, 1/129; Ahmad Shaakir said: its isnaad is saheeh, no. 1065).

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Gambling

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), gambling, al-ansaab (stone altars for sacrifices to idols, etc.), and al-azlaam (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination of Shaytaan's handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that abomination, in order that you may be successful." [al-Maa'idah 5:90]

Gambling was very common during the Jaahiliyyah; in one of the most well-known forms of gambling, ten people would buy a camel, each paying an equal share, then they would throw down arrows - a form of drawing lots. Seven people would win unequal shares and three would be left empty-handed.

Nowadays there are many forms of gambling, including:

lotteries and raffles, in which people pay money to buy numbers, then numbers are drawn for first prize, second prize, and so on for a variety of prizes. This is haraam, even when it is supposedly done for charity.

Buying a product which includes something unknown, or paying for a number for a draw which will decide who gets what.

Another modern form of gambling is insurance, such as life insurance, car insurance, product insurance, insurance against fire or theft, third party insurance, comprehensive insurance, and so on. There are so many types of insurance that some singers even insure their voices!

All of the above are forms of gambling. Nowadays there are even clubs that are devoted exclusively to gambling, in which there are so-called "green tables" (roulette tables) just for people to commit this sin. Other forms of gambling include betting on horse races and other sports, fruit-machines and

the like in amusement centres, and competitions in which the victors win prizes, as a group of scholars have stated.

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Theft

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "Cut off (from the wrist joint) the (right) hand of the thief, male or female, as a recompense for that which they have committed, a punishment by way of example from Allah. And Allah is All-Powerful, All-Wise." [al-Maa'idah 5:38]

One of the worst forms of this sin is theft from the pilgrims who come on Hajj and 'Umrah to the Ancient House of Allah. This kind of thief has no respect for the limits set by Allah in the best region on earth and around the House of Allah. In the report about Salaat al-Kusoof (the eclipse prayer), it is reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Hell was brought near, and that was when you saw me stepping backwards, because I feared that its heat would touch me. I saw therein the man with the crooked stick dragging his intestines in the Fire. He used to steal from the hujjaaj (pilgrims) with his crooked stick. If they spotted him, he would say 'This got caught on my stick,' and if they did not spot him, he would take whatever he had stolen . . ."

Another of the worst forms of theft is stealing from the public purse. Some of those who do this say "We are only doing what others do." They do not realize that what they are doing is effectively stealing from all the Muslims, because the public purse belongs to all the Muslims. Imitating those who do not fear Allah is no excuse. Some people steal from the wealth of the kuffaar on the grounds that they are kuffaar, but this is wrong; the only kuffaar whose wealth we are allowed to take away are those who are actively fighting the Muslims, which does not apply to every kaafir individual or company.

Another form of theft is pick-pocketing, stealing something from a person's pocket without him realizing. Some thieves enter people's houses as visitors, and steal from them. Some steal from their guests' bags. Some - including women - go into stores and hide things in their pockets or under their clothing. Some think that the theft of small or cheap items is of little consequence, but the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah has cursed the thief who steals an egg and has his hand cut off, and the thief who steals a rope and has his hand cut off." (Reported by al-Bukhaari, see Fath al-Baari, 12/81).

Everyone who steals something must first repent to Allah then return the item to its rightful owner, whether openly or secretly, in person or via a third

party. If he fails to find the rightful owner or his heirs after much effort, then he should give the property in charity, with the intention that the reward should be given to the rightful owner.

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Offering or accepting bribes

Giving a bribe to a qaadi or judge to make him turn a blind eye to the truth or to make a false claim succeed is a sin, because it leads to oppression and injustice for the person who is in the right, and it spreads corruption. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And eat up not one another's property unjustly, not give bribery to the rulers that you may knowingly eat up a part of the property of others sinfully." [al-Baqarah 2:188]

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah has cursed those who give and accept bribes with regard to judging." (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, 2/387; see also Saheeh al-Jaami', 5069). However, payments made in order to reach the truth or avert injustice when there is no other way of doing so are not included in this warning.

Bribery is so widespread nowadays that it more of a source of income than the regular salary for some workers. Some companies even include bribes as a factor in their budgets, under a variety of headings, and some dealings cannot begin or end without the payment of a bribe. Much harm is caused to the poor and many safeguards are broken because of bribes. Bribery is a cause of corruption whereby employees act against their employers, and one can only get good service if one pays a bribe - the person who refuses to pay will get shoddy or late service, and people who come after him but are willing to pay will be served before him. Because of bribery, a great deal of money which is due to employers ends up in the pockets of sales representatives and those responsible for making company purchases. It is little wonder, then that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prayed to Allah to deprive all those involved of His Mercy. 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'The curse of Allah be upon the one who gives a bribe and the one who accepts it." (Reported by Ibn Maajah, 2313; see also Saheeh al-Jaami', 5114).

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Seizing land by force

When there is no fear of Allah, strength and cunning are a disaster because the one who possesses these qualities uses them to oppress others, such as seizing other people's possessions, including their land. The punishment for this is extremely severe. 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever seizes any piece of land unlawfully, on the Day of Resurrection Allah will make the ground swallow him up to the seventh depth of the earth." (Reported by al-Bukhari; see al-Fath (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "Allah has cursed the one who changes the boundary-markers of the land." (Reported by Muslim, with commentary by al-Nawawi, 13/141).

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Accepting a gift in return for interceding

To have a position of high standing among people is one of the blessings of Allah to His slave, if he is grateful. One way in which a person may give thanks for this blessing is by using his position to benefit other Muslims. This is part of the general meaning of the hadith: "Whoever among you is able to benefit his brother, then let him do so." (Reported by Muslim, 4/1726). The person who uses his position to benefit others by averting injustice or bringing some good, without doing anything that is haram or infringes on the rights of others, will be rewarded by Allah, so long as his intention is sincere, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told us: "Intercede, you will be rewarded." (Reported by Abu Dawud, 5132; the hadeeth is also reported in al-Saheehayn, see Fath al-Baari, 10/450, Kitaab al-adab, Baab ta'aawun al-mu'mineen ba'duhum ba'dan).

It is not permitted to accept anything in return for this intercession or mediation. Evidence for this may be seen in the hadith narrated by Abu Umaamah (may Allah be pleased with him): "Whoever intercedes for someone then accepts a gift (in return for it), has committed a serious type of riba." (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, 5/261; see Saheeh al-Jaami', 6292).

Some people offer the opportunity to benefit from their position, in return for a sum of money, in order to help someone get a job, or a transfer from one office or area to another, or treatment for the sick, etc. The soundest opinion is that this exchange is haram, because of the hadith of Abu Umaamah quoted above, whose apparent meaning is that accepting such gifts is wrong, even if no agreement was previously made. (From the spoken statements of 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz). The reward which the doer of good will receive from Allah on the Day of Judgement should be sufficient. A man came to al-Hasan ibn Sahl asking him to intercede for him in some matter, which he did; then the

man came to thank him. Al-Hasan ibn Sahl said to him, "Why are you thanking us? We believe that zakaat is due on positions of rank just as it is due on wealth." (Ibn Muflih, al-Aadaab al-Shar'iyyah, 2/176).

It is worth pointing out here that there is a difference between hiring someone to do legal paperwork for you and paying him wages in return, which has to do with the legitimate hiring of labour, and using a person's position to intercede for you in return for money, which is haraam.

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Hiring someone and benefitting from his labour, then not paying him his wages

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) encouraged speedy payment of wages to people hired for their labour. He said: "Give the hired man his wages before his sweat dries." (Reported by Ibn Maajah, 2/817; see also Saheeh al-Jaami', 1493).

One form of oppression or injustice that is common in Muslim societies is the failure to give employees and workers their rights. This takes many forms, for example:

Denying an employee's rights in totality, where the employee has no proof of his rights. He may have lost his dues in this world, but he will not lose them before Allah on the Day of Resurrection. So the oppressor who consumed the money due to the victim will be brought forth, and his victim will be given some of his hasanaat in compensation (i.e. some of the oppressor's good deeds will be added to his victim's credit). If the hasanaat are not enough, some of the victim's sayi'aat (bad deeds) will be added to the oppressor, then he will be thrown into Hell.

Not giving the employee his full rights. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "Woe to al-Mutaffifeen [those who give less in measure and weight (decrease the rights of others)]." [al-Mutaffifeen 83:1] One example of this is the action of some bosses who bring workers from their homelands with a contract to pay a certain wage. Once the people are committed and have started to work for him, he goes and changes the contracts, altering them to state a lower wage than the one actually agreed upon. The employees stay because they have no choice and have no proof of their rights; all they can do is complain to Allah. If the employer is a Muslim and the employee is not, this lowering of wages is a way of turning people away from the Straight Path, and he will carry his sin.

Making the employee do extra work or put in longer hours, without paying him overtime or giving him any more than the basic salary.

Some bosses delay payment of wages and pay up only after much struggle, complaining, chasing and court cases. Their aim may be to make the employee give up his claim to his rightful wages and stop asking; or they may want to invest this money, perhaps by lending it for interest. Meanwhile, the poor employee cannot buy his daily bread or send anything home to his needy wife and children for whose sake he left to work overseas. Woe to those oppressors on that painful Day! Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah says: 'There are three whom I will oppose on the Day of Resurrection: a man who gives his word, swearing by Me, then breaks it, a man who sells a free man into slavery and keeps the money, and a man who hires another and benefits from his labour, then does not pay him his wages." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see Fath al-Baari, 4/447).

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Not giving gifts equally to one's children

Some people show favouritism in the way they give gifts to some of their children but not others. According to the soundest opinion, doing this is haram unless there is some legitimate reason, such as one child being in greater need than the others due to sickness, being in debt, being rewarded for having memorized the entire Qur'an, being unable to find a job, having a large family, being a full-time student, etc. When a father gives something to one of his children who is in need, he should have the intention to give similarly to any other children of his should the need arise. General proof of this principle may be seen in the ayah (interpretation of the meaning): ". . . Be just: that is nearer to piety, and fear Allah . . ." [al-Maa'idah 5:8]. Specific evidence is found in the report of al-Nu'maan ibn Basheer (may Allah be pleased with him), whose father brought him to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: "I have given this son of mine a slave that I had." The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked him, "Did you give all your children a similar gift?" He said, "No." The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Then take (the gift) back." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see al-Fath, 5/211). According to another report, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Fear Allah and be fair to your children," so he went away and took his gift back. (al-Fath 5/211). According to a third report, he said, "Do not ask me to be a witness, for I will not bear witness to injustice." (Sahih Muslim, 3/1243). Sons may be given twice as much as daughters, as in the case of inheritance, according to Imam Ahmad, may Allah have mercy on him (Abu Dawud, Masaa'il al-Imam Ahmad, 204; Imam Ibn al-Qayyim explained

this in more detail in his footnotes). But there are some families where fathers do not fear Allah, and their favouritism creates hatred and jealousy among the children. A father may give one child more because he looks like his paternal uncles, and give less to another child because he looks like his maternal uncles; or he may give more to the children of one wife and less to the children of another wife; or he may put one wife's children in private schools, but not the other wife's children. This will ultimately backfire on him, because in most cases the one who is deprived in this way will not respect his father or treat him kindly in the future. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked the man who showed favouritism to one son, "Do you not want all your children to respect you equally?" (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 4/269; see also Sahih al-Jaami, 1623).

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Asking people for money when one is not in need

Sahl ibn al-Hanzaliyyah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever asks people for money when he has what is sufficient for him is only asking for more of the embers of Hell." They asked him, "O Messenger of Allah, what is sufficient so that he does not have to ask for more?" He said: "Having enough to eat lunch and dinner." (Reported by Abu Dawud, 2/281; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 6280). Ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever asks the people for money when he has what is sufficient for him will come on the Day of Judgement with scratches and lacerations on his face." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 1/388; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 6255). Some beggars come to the mosques, interrupting people's worship with their complaints; some of them lie, bringing forged papers and telling tall stories; some of them distribute their family members around different mosques, then they regroup and move on to other mosques. Some of these people may in fact be well-off, to an extent which only Allah knows; only when they die do others find out what they have left behind. Meanwhile, there are others who are truly in need, but people are not aware of it and may think they have enough, because they are too proud and do not beg of people at all; nobody knows their true situation so no-one gives them charity.

Seeking a loan with no intention of paying it back

The dues owed by one person to another are very important in the sight of Allah, so much so that if a person falls short in his duties towards Allah, he may be forgiven if he repents, but when it comes to the rights of other people,

he has to fulfil them before the Day comes when dinars and dirhams will be of no avail, and only hasanaat and sayi'aat (good and bad deeds) will count. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Verily, Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those to whom they are due . . ." [al-Nisaa' 4:58]

One of the widespread problems in our society is this casual approach to loans; some people take out loans not for some urgent need but because they want to expand their businesses or keep up with others by buying new cars or furniture or other temporary luxuries of this life. Often these people let themselves in for the confusion of installment plans, which are dubious or maybe even haram.

A casual approach to loans leads people to delay repayments, which in turn leads to loss and financial ruin of others. Warning of the consequences of this deed, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever takes people's money with the intention of paying them back, Allah will pay him back, but whoever takes people's money with the intention of wasting it, Allah will destroy him." (Reported by al-Bukhari; see Fath al-Baari, 5/54). People take the matter of loans very lightly, but in the sight of Allah it is a serious matter, so much so that even the shaheed (martyr), with his immense reward and high status, is not free of the consequences of debt. Evidence of this is seen in the hadith: "Glory be to Allah, Who has revealed the seriousness of debt. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, if a man were slain in the way of Allah, then brought back to life, then killed again and brought back to life again, then killed a third time, but he owed a debt, he would not be admitted to Paradise until his debt was paid off." (Reported by al-Nisaa'i; see al-Mujtabaa, 7/314, and Sahih al-Jaami', 3594). Now will these squanderers be deterred from such a casual approach?

Consuming haram wealth

The person who does not fear Allah does not care where he earns his money or how he spends it; his only concern is to increase his bank balance, even if it is haram and ill-gotten by means of theft, bribery, extortion, forgery, selling haram things, riba (usury), consuming an orphan's wealth, earnings from haram work like fortune-telling, immorality or singing, stealing from the Muslim treasury or public property, taking people's money by coercion or high-pressure sales tactics, begging when one is not in need, etc. Then he buys food, clothing and transportation with this ill-gotten money, and builds or rents a house, and furnishes it, and fills his stomach with haram food. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Any flesh that grows from ill-gotten gains is more deserving of being touched by Hell-fire . . ." (Reported by al-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer, 19/136; see also Sahih al-Jaami',

4495). On the Day of Resurrection, each person will be asked how he earned money and on what he spent it, and there will be doom and loss. Anyone who still has haram money should hasten to get rid of it; if it is due to anyone else, then he should hasten to return it and ask for his forgiveness before there comes a Day on which dinars and dirhams will be of no avail, and all that will count will be hasanaat and sayi'aat.

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Drinking khamr - even a single drop

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): ". . . Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), gambling, al-ansaab (stone altars for sacrifices to idols, etc.) and al-azlaam (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination of Shaytaan's handiwork. So avoid (strictly) all that (abomination) in order that you may be successful." [al-Maa'idah 5:90]

The command to avoid these things is the strongest indication that they are forbidden. Khamr ("wine", alcohol) is compared to al-ansaab, which were idols of the kuffaar; there is no excuse for those who argue that the Qur'an does not say it is forbidden but only tells us to avoid it!

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also issued a stern warning to the one who drinks khamr. Jaabir reported that he said: "Allah has promised the one who drinks khamr that He will make him drink the mud of khibaal." The people asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what is the mud of khibaal?" He said, "The sweat of the people of Hell, or the juice of the people of Hell." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1587). Ibn 'Abbaas reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever dies and has the habit of drinking khamr, he will meet Allah as one who worships idols." (Reported by al-Tabaraani, 12/45; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 6525).

Nowadays there are very many kinds of khamr, with many names in Arabic and other languages, such as beer, ji'ah (beer), alcohol, araq ("arrack"), vodka, champagne, etc. There has appeared in this ummah the type of person described by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "Some people of my ummah will drink khamr, calling it by another name." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 5/342; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 5453). So they may call it "spirits" instead of khamr, as an attempt to distort the facts and deceive. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "They (think to) deceive Allah and those who believe, while they only deceive themselves, and perceive (it) not!" [al-Baqarah 2:9]

Islam imposes strict controls on this matter, and deals with it decisively so that there is no room for misunderstanding. The Prophet (peace and blessings

of Allah be upon him) said: "Every intoxicant is khamr and every intoxicant is haram." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1587). Everything that has the effect of clouding the mind is haram, whether in large or small amounts. (The hadith, "Whatever causes intoxication in large amounts, a small amount of it is haram," was reported by Abu Dawud, no. 3681; see Saheeh Abi Dawud, no. 3128). No matter how many different names there are, they all refer to one thing, and the ruling concerning it is well-known.

Finally, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) issued a warning to those who drink khamr: "Whoever drinks khamr and becomes intoxicated, his prayers will not be accepted for forty days, and if he dies he will enter Hell, and if he repents Allah will accept his repentance. If he drinks again and becomes intoxicated again, his prayers will not be accepted for forty days, and if he dies he will enter Hell, and if he repents Allah will accept his repentance. If he drinks again and becomes intoxicated again, his prayers will not be accepted for forty days, and if he dies he will enter Hell, and if he repents Allah will accept his repentance. If he drinks a fourth time, Allah promises that He will make him drink from the mud of khibaal on the Day of Resurrection. The people asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what is the mud of khibaal?" He said, "The juice of the people of Hell." (Reported by Ibn Maajah, no. 3377; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 6313).

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Using vessels of gold and silver, or eating and drinking from them

Nowadays hardly any household goods stores are free of vessels made of gold and silver, or plated with these metals. The same applies to homes of rich people and many hotels. This kind of thing has become one of the precious gifts that people give one another on special occasions. Some people may not have these things at home, but they use them in other people's homes and when invited to a meal. All of these are actions which are forbidden in Islam. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) issued a stern warning about using such vessels. Umm Salamah reported that he said: "The one who eats or drinks from a vessel of gold or silver is putting fire from Hell into his stomach." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1634). This ruling applies to every kind of vessel or utensil that is made of gold or silver, such as plates, forks, spoons, knives, trays on which food is offered to guests, boxes of sweets which are given to wedding guests, and so on.

Some people might say, "We are not using them, we are just putting them on display in a glass case." This is not permitted either, to prevent any possibility of these things being used. (From the spoken statements of Shaykh 'Abd al'-'Aziz ibn Baaz.)

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Bearing false witness

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): ". . . So shun the abomination (worship) of idols, and shun lying speech (false statements) - hunafaa' Lillah (i.e., to worship none but Allah), not associating partners (in worship, etc.) unto Him . . ." [al-Hajj 22:30-31]

'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakrah (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that his father said: "We were with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when he said: 'I fear for you three major sins' - three times: 'associating partners with Allah, disobedience to parents, and -' - he was reclining but he sat up at this point and said: ' - and bearing false witness.' He kept repeating this with such fervour that we wished he would stop (for his own sake)." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see al-Fath, 5/261).

The warning against bearing false witness was uttered repeatedly because people take it too lightly and there are many motives for doing so, such as hatred and envy. The resulting corruption is great indeed: how many people have lost their rights because of false witness! How many innocent people have been treated unjustly, and how many people have gained what they did not deserve, because of it!

An example of the ways in which people take this matter lightly is what sometimes happens in the courts, when a person might say to someone he has only just met, "Testify for me and I will testify for you." So one might testify for the other in a case where he does not have the necessary knowledge of what really happened, like testifying that this person owns a piece of land or a house, or recommending him when he has never seen him before that day in court. This is lying and false witness, whereas testimony should be as described in the Book of Allah: ". . . we testify not except according to what we know . . ." [Yusuf 12:81]

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Listening to music and musical instruments

Ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) used to swear by Allah that the ayah "And of mankind is he who purchases idle talk to mislead (men) from the Path of Allah . . ." [Luqmaan 31:6] referred to singing. Abu 'Aamir and Abu Maalik al-Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with them) reported that the

Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Among my ummah will be those who make permissible al-hira (adultry or zinah), silk, khamr and musical instruments . . ." (Reported by al-Bukhari; see al-Fath, 10/51). Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "In this ummah there will be punishments of earthquakes, showers of stones and deformity (transformation into animals); that will be when the people drink khamr, listen to female singers and play musical instruments." (See al-Silsilah al-Sahihah, 2203; attributed to Ibn Abi'l-Dunyaa, Dhamm al-Malaahi; the hadith was narrated by al-Tirmidhi, no. 2212).

(Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) explained the meaning of this ayah. He said: "Do you know what gheebah (gossip or backbiting) is?" They said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said: "To say something about your brother that he does not want to be said." He was asked, "What do you think if what is said about him is true?" He said, "If what you say about him is true, this is backbiting, and if what you say about him is not true, this is a lie." (Reported by Muslim, 4/2001).

Gossip or backbiting means saying something about a Muslim which may be true but which he does not like to hear spoken, whether it be about his physical appearance, his adherence to religion, his worldly affairs, his self, his behaviour or his character. There are many forms of gossip, including talking about a person's faults and imitating him to make fun of him.

People take the matter of gheebah very lightly, although it is very serious in the sight of Allah, as is indicated by the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "There are seventy-two forms of riba, the least of which is as bad as a man having intercourse with his own mother, and the worst of which is when a man slanders the honour of his brother." (Silsilah al-Sahih, 1871).

(Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "No eavesdropper will enter Paradise." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see al-Fath, 10/472; "eavesdropper" here refers to a person who eavesdrops on others without their knowing, then goes and tells others what he has heard)

Ibn 'Abbas said: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed by one of the gardens of Madinah, and heard the sound of two people being punished in their graves. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "They are being punished, but they are not being punished for any major sin; one of them used never to clean himself properly after urinating, and the other used to spread malicious slander . . ." (Reported by al-Bukhari; see Fath al-Baari, 1/317).

One of the worst forms of this sin is to cause trouble between a husband and wife, or vice versa, or to tell one's boss what other employees are saying, in order to create trouble. All of this is haram.

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Looking into people's houses without their permission

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and greeted those in them . . ." [al-Noor 24:27]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) explained that the reason why permission was to be sought was for fear that the person seeking to enter might see something private in the house: "The rule of seeking permission has been established for the sake of (not) seeing." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see Fath al-Baari, 11/24). Nowadays, when houses and buildings are too close to one another or even attached, and doors and windows face one another, the possibility of neighbours seeing one another has increased greatly. Many people do not lower their gaze, and some of those who live on higher floors may deliberately look down from their roofs and windows into neighbouring homes that are lower than their own. This is an act of betrayal and an invasion of their neighbours' privacy, as well as being the way that leads to haram deeds. A great deal of misery and trouble has resulted from this, and that fact that the Sharee'ah counts the eye of the one who spies as worthless is sufficient proof of the seriousness of the matter. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever looks into somebody's house without their permission, it is permissible for them to put out his eye." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1699). According to another report, he said: "Put out his eye, and there will be no penalty or retribution." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 2/385; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 6022).

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Two people conversing privately to the exclusion of a third

This is one of the problems that exist in social gatherings, and it is one of the ways in which Shaytan divides the Muslims and makes some of them hate others. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) explained the rule and the wisdom behind it: "If you are three, then two should not converse privately to the exclusion of a third until you are joined by other people, because this will make him sad." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see Fath al-

Baari, 11/83). This also includes three people talking privately to the exclusion of a fourth, and so on, and two people speaking in a language which the third does not understand, because this is undoubtedly a form of disdain towards the third, and gives the impression that they intend to hurt him, etc.

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Isbaal - wearing clothes that come down below the ankles

One of the things which people treat as insignificant, although it is serious in the sight of Allah, is Isbaal, which means lengthening one's clothes below the ankles; some people let their clothes touch the ground, and some allow them to drag on the floor behind them.

Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "There are three to whom Allah will not speak on the Day of Resurrection, nor look at nor praise: the one who wears his lower garment below the ankles; the one who reminds others of his gifts or favours; and the one who sells his product by means of lies and false oaths." (Reported by Muslim, 1/102).

The one who says, "I am not wearing my clothes below my ankles out of arrogance" is in fact praising himself in a way that is unacceptable. The warning against Isbaal is issued to all, regardless of whether they do it out of arrogance or not, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whatever part of the lower garment is below the ankles is in Hell." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 6/254; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 5571). The person whose Isbaal is the result of arrogance will be more severely punished than the one who has no such intention, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever trails his garment out of pride, Allah will not even look at him on the Day of Resurrection." (Reported by al-Bukhari, no. 3465, al-Bagha edition) - this is because he is combining two sins in one action. Wearing any clothes below the ankle is haram, as is indicated in the hadith reported by Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him and his father): "Isbaal may be done with an izaar (lower garment), qamees (shirt or upper garment) and 'amaamah (turban); whoever drags any part of them on the ground out of pride, Allah will not look at him on the Day of Resurrection." (Reported by Abu Dawud, 4/353; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 2770). Women are permitted to lengthen their garments by one or two handspans to cover the feet or as a precaution against anything being uncovered by the wind, etc., but it is not permitted to do more than that, as is done with some wedding dresses which may have a train several meters long, which has to be carried behind the bride.

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Men wearing gold in any shape or form

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Silk and gold have been permitted for the females of my ummah, and have been forbidden for the males." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 4/393; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 207).

The market nowadays is filled with any number of items designed for men, such as watches, spectacles, buttons, pens, chains and so-called "medallions," made of gold of various standards, or completely gold-plated. One of the common sins occurs in competitions where among the prizes are men's gold watches.

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw a man wearing a gold ring; he took it and threw it aside, saying, "Would any of you take a burning ember from Hell and hold it in his hand?" After the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had gone away, someone suggested to the man: "Why don't you take your ring and benefit from it (sell it)?" He said, "No, by Allah, I will never take it back when the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has thrown it aside." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1655).

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Women wearing short, tight or see-though clothes

One of the ways in which our enemies are attacking us in modern times is by means of the fashions which they design and promote, and which have become popular among Muslims. These fashions do not cover anything, because they are so short, transparent or tight; many of them are inappropriate for wearing even in front of other women or one's mahrams! The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told us that these kinds of clothes would appear among the women of the last times, as was reported in the hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him): "There are two types of the people of Hell that I have not seen: people who have whips like the tails of cattle, with which they strike the people; and women who are dressed but naked, walking with an enticing gait, with their hair looking like the humps of camels, leaning sideways. They will not enter Paradise or even smell its fragrance, although its fragrance can be detected from such-and-such a distance." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1680). Also included

in this type of clothes are the garments worn by some women which have long slits from the hem, or pieces cut out here and there; when the wearer sits down, her 'awrah (i.e., everything except the face and hands) becomes visible, apart from the fact that by wearing such clothes a woman is resembling the kuffaar and following their fashions and trends of revealing clothes. We ask Allah to keep us safe from all that. Another serious matter as regards clothing is the bad pictures which appear on some clothes, such as pictures of singers and rock groups, bottles of wine etc., pictures of animate beings which are forbidden in Islam, crosses, logos of immoral clubs and societies, or bad words which do not befit people of honour, which may be written in foreign languages.

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Wearing wigs and hairpieces, whether made from natural or artificial hair, for men and women

Asma' bint Abi Bakr said: "A woman came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I have a daughter who is going to be married; she had a fever and lost much of her hair - can I give attach false hair to her head?' He said: 'Allah has cursed the one who attaches false hair and the one who has this done.'" (Reported by Muslim, 3/1676). Jaabir ibn 'Abdullah said: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) issued strict instructions that no woman should add anything to her head." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1679).

Examples of this include the things known nowadays as wigs and hair extensions, and the many evil things with which salons are crowded. Also included are the artificial wigs worn by some actors and actresses who have no morals.

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Men resembling women and women resembling men, in dress, speech and appearance

Part of the fitrah (natural inclinations of mankind) is that men should preserve the masculinity which Allah has created in them, and women should preserve the femininity which Allah has created in them. Without this, decent human life becomes impossible. Men resembling women and vice versa is something which goes against man's innate nature (fitrah) and opens the door to corruption and widespread promiscuity. The ruling in sharee'ah is that when it is stated that the person who does a thing is cursed, that thing is

haram. Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah has cursed the men who make themselves look like women and the women who make themselves look like men." (Reported by al-Bukhari; see al-Fath, 10/332). Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) also reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah has cursed effeminate men and masculine women." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see al-Fath, 3\10/333). The resemblance may be in the way they move, walk and speak.

(Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Change this with something, but avoid black." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1663). The correct view is that women are like men in this regard: they are not permitted to dye any hairs black that are not black.

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Having pictures of animate beings on clothing, walls or paper, etc.

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The people who will be most severely punished by Allah on the Day of Resurrection are the picture-makers." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see al-Fath, 10/382). Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah says: 'Who does more wrong than the one who tries to create something like My creation; let him create a grain of wheat or an ear of corn . . .'" (Reported by al-Bukhari, see Fath al-Baari, 10/385). Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "Every picture-maker will be in the Fire, and for each picture that he made he will be given a soul, and he will be punished in Hell." Ibn 'Abbas said: If you must make pictures, draw trees and things that do not possess a soul." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1671). These ahadith clearly indicate that it is haram to make images of animate beings, whether they be humans or different kinds of animals, whether the images are two- or three dimensional. Pictures are forbidden whether they are drawn, engraved, carved, etched or cast from moulds. The ahadith which forbid making pictures cover all these methods.

The Muslim should accept what the Sharee'ah says, without arguing. Some may say "Well, I am not worshipping these pictures or prostrating to them!" But if you look closely and think about just one of the bad effects of the widespread presence of pictures in our times, you will understand the wisdom behind this prohibition: this bad effect is the provocation of sexual desire which leads to immorality, because of these pictures.

The Muslim should not keep any pictures of animate beings in his house, because this prevents the angels from entering his home. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The angels do not enter a house where there is a dog or pictures." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see al-Fath, 10/380). In many houses there are even statues, some of which represent the gods of the kuffar, which are kept for decoration; these are more haram than other kinds, just as pictures which are hung up are worse than pictures which are not hung up. How often have pictures led to glorification and grief, and led to boasting! We should not say that the pictures are kept for memories, for true memories of dear fellow-Muslims lie in the heart, and one remembers them by praying for forgiveness and mercy for them. One should remove all these pictures, or blot them out, except when it is too difficult to do so, as with these pictures which are all over food packaging, or in encyclopedias and reference books; even then, you should try to remove it, and to be careful about the bad pictures in some books. It is permissible to keep some necessary pictures, such as those on identity cards and licences, or pictures which are walked on (such as pictures in carpets). "So keep your duty to Allah and fear Him as much as you can . . ." [al-Taghaabun 64:16]

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Lying about one's dreams

Some people deliberately fabricate dreams and visions that they have not really seen, as a means of gaining spiritual prestige and fame, or for some material gains, or to scare their enemies, and the like. Many of the common people have a strong belief in dreams and are easily deceived by such lies. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) issued a stern warning to whoever does such a thing: "One of the worst types of lie is for a man to claim to belong to someone other than his real father, or to claim to have seen something which he did not see, or to attribute to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) words that he did not say." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see al-Fath, 6/540). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said: "Whoever claims to have seen a dream which he did not see will be ordered to tie two grains together, and he will never be able to do it . . ." (Reported by al-Bukhari; see al-Fath, 12/427). Tying two grains together is impossible, so the punishment will fit the crime.

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Sitting or walking on graves, or answering the call of nature in a graveyard

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If any of you were to sit on a live coal and let it burn his clothes until it reached his skin, this would be better for him than sitting on a grave." (Reported by Muslim, 2/667). As for stepping on graves, many people do this, and when a person is buried you can see people who do not care where they walk (even wearing shoes sometimes) on neighbouring graves, with no respect for the dead. The seriousness of this matter is clear from the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "If I were to walk on coals or on a sword, or to mend my shoe with my own foot, this would be better for me than walking on the grave of a Muslim." (Reported by Ibn Maajah, 1/499; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 5038). So what about those who take over the site of a graveyard and build businesses or homes there? As for responding to the call of nature in a graveyard, this is something done by people who have no morals at all. When they feel the need, they jump over the wall of the graveyard and offend the dead with their unpleasant odours and impure waste matter. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "'I wouldn't care if it were in the middle of the graveyard or in the middle of the marketplace" (ibid.) - i.e. answering the call of nature in a graveyard is like uncovering one's 'awrah and answering the call of nature in front of people in a marketplace. Those who deliberately throw their trash into graveyards (especially those which are abandoned and whose walls are broken down) are included in this condemnation. Among the etiquette required of those who visit graveyards is taking off their shoes when they want to walk between graves.

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Not cleaning oneself properly after passing water

One of the beauties of Islam is that it teaches everything that will improve and reform mankind, including how to remove impurities by cleaning oneself properly after urinating or defecating. But some people are very careless about this matter, and allow their clothes and bodies to become contaminated, thus causing their prayers to be invalidated. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told us that this is one of the causes for the punishment in the grave. Ibn 'Abbas said: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) passed by one of the gardens of Madinah, and heard the sound of two men being punished in their graves. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "They are being punished, but they are not being punished for any major sin. One of them used not to clean himself properly after urinating, and the other used to spread malicious gossip." (Reported by al-Bukhari; see Fath al-Baari, 1/317). Indeed, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said that "most of the punishment of the grave will be because of urine." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 2/326; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 1213). Not cleaning oneself properly after urinating also includes undue haste

in completing the action, or deliberately urinating in a position or place where the urine can come back on oneself, or failing to clean oneself afterwards, or not cleaning oneself properly. Modern imitation of the kuffaar has reached such an extent that some rest rooms for men contain wall-mounted urinals which are open to view, so a person who uses them is urinating in full view of anyone who comes and goes with no shame, in the midst of impurity. Thus he combines two abhorrent and forbidden acts in one deed: not hiding his private parts from the view of others, and nor cleaning himself properly after urinating.

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Eavesdropping on people who do not want to be heard

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): ". . . And spy not (on one another) . . ." [al-Hujuraat 49:12].

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever listens to people's conversations without their permission will have molten lead poured into his ears on the Day of Resurrection . . ." (Reported by al-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer, 11/248-249; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 6004).

If this person then goes and tells others of the conversation he overheard in order to cause trouble for them, then his sin of spying is compounded by another sin, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The eavesdropper will not enter Paradise." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see Fath al-Baari, 10/472).

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Being a bad neighbour

Allah has enjoined kind treatment of neighbours in the Qur'an (interpretation of the meaning): "Worship Allah and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the poor, the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and those slaves whom your right hands possess. Verily, Allah does not like such as are proud and boastful." [Al-Nisaa' 4:36]

Harming a neighbour is haram because of the greatness of his rights. Abu Shurayh (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "By Allah, he does not believe, by

Allah, he does not believe, by Allah, he does not believe." He was asked, "Who, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "The one from whose harm his neighbour is not safe." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see Fath al-Baari, 10/443)

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) regarded the praise or criticism of a neighbour as a measure of a person's goodness or badness. Ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that a man said to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "O Messenger of Allah, how may I know if I am doing well or not?" The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If you hear your neighbour say that you are good, then you are doing well, and if you hear him saying that you are bad, you are not doing well." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 1/402, see also Sahih al-Jaami', 623).

Harming a neighbour may take many forms, including: not allowing him to fix a piece of wood to a shared wall or fence; expanding one's dwelling in such a way as to deprive him of sun or air without his permission; opening windows overlooking his house and looking out of them to invade his privacy; disturbing him with loud sounds such as hammering or shouting, especially when he is asleep or resting; or throwing trash in front of his door. The sin of such deeds is increased when they are done to a neighbour, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If a man were to commit adultery with ten women, it would be better for him than committing adultery with the wife of his neighbour, and if a man were to steal from ten houses, it would be better for him than stealing from the house of his neighbour." (Reported by al-Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, no. 103; see also al-Silsilah al-Sahihan, 65). Some treacherous people take advantage of a neighbour's absence during his night shift to enter his house and commit immoral acts. Woe to them of the punishment of a painful Day!

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Writing a will for the purpose of harming one of the heirs

One of the basic principles of Sharee'ah is that there should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm. One example of this harm is writing a will that deprives one or some of the legitimate heirs of his or their rights. Such a person is warned by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "Whoever harms (others), Allah will harm him, and whoever makes things difficult for others, Allah will make things difficult for him." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 3/453; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 6348). Ways in which a person's will can harm others is by denying an heir of his rights, or giving an heir more than he is entitled to in Sharee'ah, or by bequeathing more than a third to any one person.

In places where people are not subject to the rule of Sharee'ah, it may be difficult for a person to take what is his by rights granted by Allah, because courts that apply man-made laws may order that the unfair will registered with a lawyer be executed. "Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for that they earn thereby." [al-Baqarah 2:79]

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Playing with dice

Many popular games involve elements that are haram; among them are games in which pieces are moved according to the throw of a dice, such as backgammon, etc. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) warned that these dice open the door to gambling: "Whoever plays with dice, it is as if he dipped his finger in the flesh and blood of swine." (Reported by Muslim, 4/1770). Abu Musa (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever plays with dice has disobeyed Allah and His Messenger." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 4/394; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 6505).

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Cursing a believer or someone who does not deserve to be cursed

Many people do not control their tongues at times of anger, and are quick to curse people, animals, inanimate objects, days, hours, etc. They may even curse themselves and their children, or a husband may curse his wife and vice versa. This is a very serious matter. Abu Zayd Thaabit ibn al-Dahhaak al-Ansari (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ". . . whoever curses a believer, it is as if he killed him." (Reported al-Bukhari, see Fath al-Baari, 10/465). Because cursing is more common among women, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) explained that this would be one of the reasons for them entering Hell, and that those who curse will not be intercessors on the Day of Resurrection. More serious than that is the fact that the curse will come back on the one who utters it, if he says it unfairly; in that case he will have prayed against himself and excluded himself from the mercy of Allah.

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Wailing (at time of bereavement)

One of the haram deeds that some women do is to raise their voices in screaming and eulogizing the dead, striking their faces, tearing their clothes, cutting or tearing out their hair, etc. All of this indicates that a person does not accept the decree of Allah and is not bearing disaster with fortitude and patience. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cursed the one who does this. Abu Umaamah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cursed the woman who strikes her face, tears her clothes and cries out about woe and doom. (Reported by Ibn Maajah, 1/505; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 5068). 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "He is not one of us who strikes his cheeks, tears his clothes and prays with the supplication of the Jaahiliyyah." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see Fath al-Baari, 3/163). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If the woman who wails does not repent before her death, she will be raised on the Day of Resurrection wearing a shirt of tar and a garment of scabs." (Reported by Muslim, no. 934)

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Striking or branding the face

Jaabir said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade striking or branding the face." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1673).

(Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever forsakes his bother for a year, it is as if he has shed his blood." (Reported by al-Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, hadith no. 406; see also Sahih al-Jaami', 6557).

It is bad enough that division among Muslims results in their being deprived of the forgiveness of Allah, may He be glorified. Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The deeds of the people are shown to Allah twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays; He forgives all His believing slaves, except for the one between whom and his brother is enmity. He says, 'Leave these two until they reconcile.'" (Reported by Muslim, 4/1988).

Whichever of the two parties repents to Allah must then go back to his brother and greet him with salaam; if he does this and the other person ignores him, then the former is free of blame and the responsibility falls upon the latter. Abu Ayub reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "It is not permissible for a man to forsake his brother for more than three nights, each turning away if they meet. The better of the two is the one who is the first to greet the other with salaam." (Reported by al-Bukhari, Fath al-Baari, 10/492).

There may be cases where there is a legitimate reason for forsaking a person, such as his not praying, or persisting in immorality. If forsaking him will benefit him by bringing him to his senses and making him see the error of his ways, then it is obligatory to forsake him, but if it will only make him more stubborn and persistent in his sin, then it is not right to forsake him, because nothing is achieved by doing so. Forsaking him will only make matters worse, so the right thing to do is to continue treating him kindly, and advising and reminding him.

In conclusion, this is what Allah has enabled me to write about the prohibitions that are widely ignored. This is a lengthy topic, and in order that readers may further benefit, another chapter is needed, in which a group of prohibitions mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah will be listed. This will appear as a separate work, insha Allah. I ask Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, by His Most Beautiful Names, to give us enough awareness and fear of Him to keep us away from sin, and enough devotion and obedience to Him to help us reach His Paradise, to forgive us for our sins and by His grace to make us content with what He has permitted and keep us away from what He has forbidden. May He accept our repentance and cleanse us from sin, for He is the All-Hearing, the One Who answers prayers. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the Unlettered Prophet, Muhammad, and upon all his family and companions. All praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

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